

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP23/43

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
15 SEPTEMBER 2023**

SUBJECT: SUPPORTING VULNERABLE VICTIMS

SUMMARY:

1. This report sets out the progress that has been made in respect of the support provided to vulnerable victims. It provides background context in respect of the service provided to victims, an update on the work ongoing to increase the delivery of the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) and more detailed updates in respect of the work ongoing to support the most vulnerable victims and victims of the most serious crimes.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is asked to consider the progress made by the Constabulary and raise issues with Chief Constable as appropriate to the PCC's role in holding the Chief Constable to account.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The services provided to victims remain central to Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan and the Chief Constable's Delivery Plan. From the first call for service to a criminal justice outcome the Constabulary aims to deliver a service that delivers the Victims' Code and provides confidence and reassurance for victims and witnesses. Suffolk Constabulary's work in relation to victims focusses on these key elements of the Police and Crime Plan:

- Keeping people informed, and updated, once they have reported a crime;
- Ensuring compliance with the police elements of the Victim Code with a strong focus on how the force supports victims through the investigation.
- Maintaining a continued focus on tackling the crimes which constitute violence against women and girls.

1.2 The service to victims is overseen through the Supporting Victims Group which is chaired by the Head of Justice Services and this group is a sub-group of the Investigation Standards Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable, Local Policing.

1.3 The service provided to victims varies according to need and this paper sets out the work that is ongoing in particular in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences and hate crime. These and other specialist areas of crime are managed within the Crime, Safeguarding and Investigation Management Command.

1.4 The Victims and Prisoners Bill continues to navigate its way through Parliament. The aims of the Bill include raising awareness of the Victims' Code and improving agency compliance which in turn should improve victims' experience of the justice system. It is important that criminal justice partners work together to ensure effective service to victims throughout the criminal justice process. Through the Local Criminal Justice Board Suffolk Constabulary works closely with its criminal justice partners to provide effective services to victims.

1.5 Whilst the partnership is strong, there are significant challenges within the criminal justice system locally as well as nationally. Court backlogs are not being reduced and delays are now also emerging in the Magistrates Courts as well as the Crown Courts. This issue continues to be actively monitored through the Local Criminal Justice Board and also through representation by the National Police Chief Council Criminal Justice Leads.

1.6 There is clearly a risk that victims and witnesses will disengage from a criminal justice process that takes years to reach a conclusion. The Constabulary's Victim and Witness Care Unit provides updates to those whose cases are awaiting trial and, with so many more cases in the system, their work has increased significantly. Additional resources have been provided and are likely to be needed until well into 2025.

2. NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK CONSTABULARIES SUPPORTING VICTIMS SUBGROUP

2.1 The Supporting Victims Subgroup is made up of representatives from various departments and includes colleagues from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk.

2.2 The aim of the subgroup is to oversee the delivery of the Victims' Code and to ensure that victims and witnesses are supported through the criminal justice process from first point of contact, ensuring their needs are met and that they receive a consistent, good quality service. The activity to deliver this aim and the strategic objectives is managed through the subgroup. The development of an information management tool that provides data on VCOP compliance

has provided an excellent resource that enables the constabulary to understand and improve that way that victim services are provided and recorded. This tool allows themes in respect of VCOP compliance to be addressed at the Supporting Victims subgroup in order to improve services.

3. VICTIMS' CODE OF PRACTICE (VCOP) COMPLIANCE

Table 1 - Overview of 12 Victim's Code Rights.



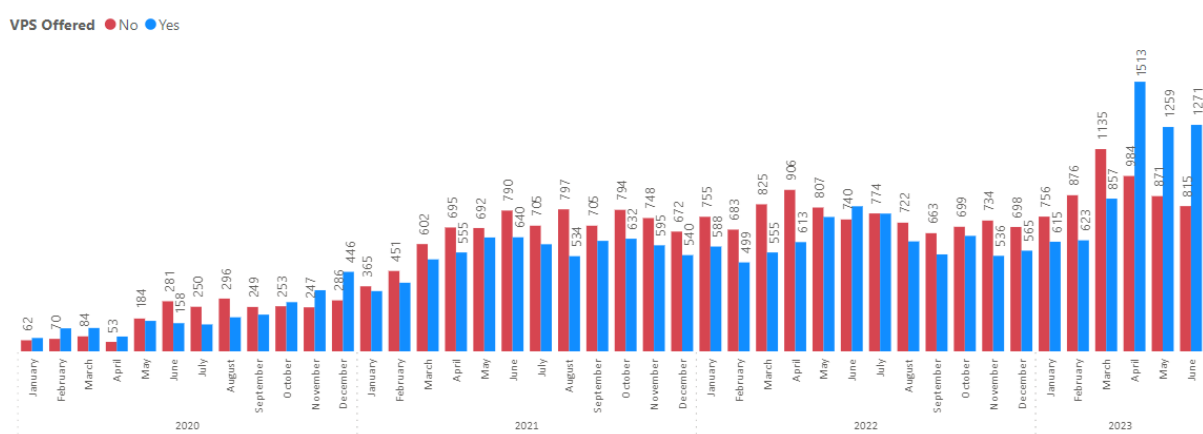
Whilst the Constabulary contribute to all the rights in some way, for the purpose of accountability and recording, only rights 1 (one) to 9 (nine) are assessed and contribute to compliance table (2) however rights 8 and 9 and generally the responsibility of the Witness Care Unit and not the Officer in the case.

Table 2 - demonstrates the overall VCOP compliance across the Constabulary between 1st March 2023 and 24th August 2023. This is further broken down by each right and the three Constabulary areas.

	By Date	By District	By Crime Group	By OIC						
Overall VCOP Rights by District										
District	Total Incidents	Average VCOP Compliance	Right 2: % Recorded within 24 hours	Right 3: % Provided with Initial Victim Letter	Right 3: % Offered Updates	Right 4: % Details sent to VS within 2 days of report	Right 4: % IVN Assessment Recorded	Right 6: % Provided information about investigation	Right 6: % Provided Updates within requested timeframe	Right 7: % VPS/BIS Offered
East SPC	2598	73.40%	94.88%	61.93%	87.57%	96.29%	86.14%	80.33%	46.45%	38.98%
West SPC	2720	70.08%	94.38%	53.49%	87.35%	96.06%	79.08%	75.66%	54.02%	31.41%
South SPC	3586	74.28%	97.13%	58.34%	94.23%	98.34%	84.86%	77.36%	59.72%	33.94%
Total	8904	72.74%	95.63%	57.91%	90.18%	97.05%	83.47%	77.71%	54.01%	34.64%

District	Average VCOP Compliance
East SPC	73.40%
South SPC	74.28%
West SPC	70.08%

- 3.1 The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime is due to become enshrined in law via the Victims’ and Prisoners’ Bill. Due to the Bill currently going through there is a significant and increased focus on how the police and other criminal justice agencies support victims of crime.
- 3.2 Constabulary data on all victims’ rights is collated into a specific VCOP dashboard. This dashboard secures data automatically from the Constabulary Crime and Intelligence system, Athena. The constabulary reviews performance against the victim’s code at monthly force performance meetings. Managers can also access the dashboard to monitor the performance of their teams in respect of VCOP compliance.
- 3.3 Data quality can be challenged because of the way that the Athena system works. If the VCOP right has been completed by the officer but this is not recorded in the correct field within the system, the data will not accurately reflect VCOP compliance. To combat this, specific training material has been developed and disseminated across the organisation to raise awareness of the fields required. This has highlighted where priorities need to be focussed on compliance and data quality in order that an improved overview of compliance can be formed.
- 3.4 The Supporting Victims Subgroup have identified areas of priority with a view to improving compliance in these areas specifically. These are the requirement to offer a Victim Personal Statement (VPS), to provide key investigative updates in a timely manner to victims of crime, and to provide written acknowledgements to victims that their crimes have been recorded. Increased performance has been seen in each of these areas, however further improvements are desired. The group has also agreed to review repeat victims of crime and identify work to reduce this likelihood and/or vulnerability to repeat crime.
- 3.5 Following periodical performance data review by the Victim’s Subgroup, it was felt following the introduction of a mandatory Victim Needs Assessment in November 2021, performance in this area was of a consistently high standard. This priority was therefore considered to have been achieved, and removed as an area of focus, thereby allowing focus on the remaining three (requirement to offer a Victim Personal Statement (VPS), to provide key investigative updates in a timely manner to victims of crime, and to provide written acknowledgements to victims that their crimes have been recorded).
- 3.6 The chart below shows an increase in victims being offered the opportunity to provide a VPS over the last three months. Whilst they can be taken at various times during the length of an investigation the victim should be offered the opportunity when they report the crime.



3.7 With regards to written acknowledgements, the automated data suggests a lower compliance rate than that obtained through manual audits (70%). Reminders to officers and staff of the need to accurately update Athena when letters are sent to victims have been shared, however the figures do show since the training and roll out of supporting guidance documents in Feb 2023 the figures have improved slightly.

Year, Month	Provided Initial Victim Letter	Not Provided Initial Victim Letter	% Provided with Initial Victim Letter
2023, February	767	2996	20.38%
2023, March	1365	2850	32.38%
2023, April	1778	2151	45.25%
2023, May	1609	2212	42.11%
2023, June	1632	2226	42.30%
2023, July	1827	2273	44.56%

3.8 The key investigative updates show a lower compliance between 55-63% over the last 6 months, training and guidance material has been provided to officers and staff clarifying milestones within an investigation that would be considered key, and reminding them of timeframes under the Victims' Code to complete these updates.

Year, Month	Provided information about investigation	Not provided information about investigation	% Provided information about investigation
2023, February	2203	1560	58.54%
2023, March	2474	1741	58.70%
2023, April	2474	1455	62.97%
2023, May	2191	1630	57.34%
2023, June	2228	1630	57.75%
2023, July	2259	1841	55.10%

3.9 The Constabulary's Witness Care Unit continues to carry heavy workloads due to Crown and Magistrates Court backlogs and cases not being finalised as quickly as pre pandemic. Additional temporary resources have provided much needed additional support and enabled the team to keep pace with workloads. It is likely that the Crown Court backlogs will not be eroded until late 2025.

3.10 The Home Office funded Special Measures Advisor (SMA) works jointly between Norfolk and Suffolk. Each month they scrutinise cases that are going to court advising officers and enabling victims and witnesses to access to the measures which will help them to deliver their best evidence in court. The concern in respect of the backlogs has been raised through the Local Criminal Justice Board and regionally and nationally through the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Criminal Justice portfolio. The table below shows the cases reviewed and supported by the SMA.

Special Measures Data July/August 2023

Number of cases received Norfolk and Suffolk	448
Number of cases Reviewed by the SMA	116
SMA Contact with Victims	65
MG2's completed by the SMA	28
No further action required	36
Special Measures deficient or Declined by the court	4
No further action required by SMA	332
OIC's contacted for amendments to MG2's	8
WCO's completed MG2's	10
Cases chased where applications had been submitted to CPS and the Court	30

4. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)

4.1 Violence against women and girls, sometimes referred to as VAWG, is an umbrella term that covers a range of abuse against women and girls, such as domestic abuse, sexual assault, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. These offences often contribute to gender inequality and outdated attitudes and prejudice which cannot be solved by policing alone. It is a societal issue that requires a whole system approach. Working together with partner agencies through the Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) is crucial to our local response and together we have developed a strategy to help reduce and prevent violence against women and girls. This is available via <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/suffolk-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy-2022-25.pdf>

4.2 The Constabulary provides quarterly updates to the County VAWG Action plan on progress. Recent updates have included:

- Working with Partners: The Constabulary is working with the Norfolk & Suffolk Victim Care (NSVC) to devise a strategy for repeat victims of VAWG related offences. We also work closely with the voluntary sector through the Sexual Violence Partners meeting to better understand the needs of victims, receive constructive feedback on our performance and to plan for future initiatives, identify trends and inhibitors. We will partake in a planned Home Office Victim Satisfaction Survey which is due to take place later this year.
- Scrutiny & Performance Evaluation: VAWG and domestic abuse continues to play a central theme in monthly Inspector Audits. This provides the constabulary with the opportunity to identify good and poor practice, trends and failings that are addressed on an individual and/or team basis. The Constabulary monitors the use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices/Orders, Stalking Prevention Order, Sexual Harm Prevention Orders. We also monitor the use of Body Worn video at incident attendance to increase the prevalence of third-party prosecutions and proactively support officers to obtain a statement on first attendance to a report of domestic violence.
- Technology: The constabulary continues to utilise new technologies whereby efforts have been centred around expanding our use of "OPTIK". OPTIK is an integrated mobile solution to make front line policing more accessible operationally while in the public domain. This now features the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA), the ability to conduct checks, obtain statements and other investigative functions remotely. A series of "Dashboards" have been developed which provides operational supervisors with access to individual and team performance data bringing greater scrutiny around operational performance. We use the dashboard to identify areas of vulnerability within town centres and VAWG-related hotspots which are then robustly targeted by the neighbourhood teams in collaboration with partners.
- Operation COMFORT: This operation launched in April 2023 with the aim of identifying the most prolific Domestic Abuse Offenders and most vulnerable repeat victims. Recognising that focus on the perpetrator must go hand-in-hand with coordinated support for the victim it aims to identify, monitor and disrupt domestic abusers, create opportunities to disrupt behaviour and support victims through support from the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Unit behavioural change program. The DAPU program has received additional funding to provide and additional behavioural change worker and victim support worker.

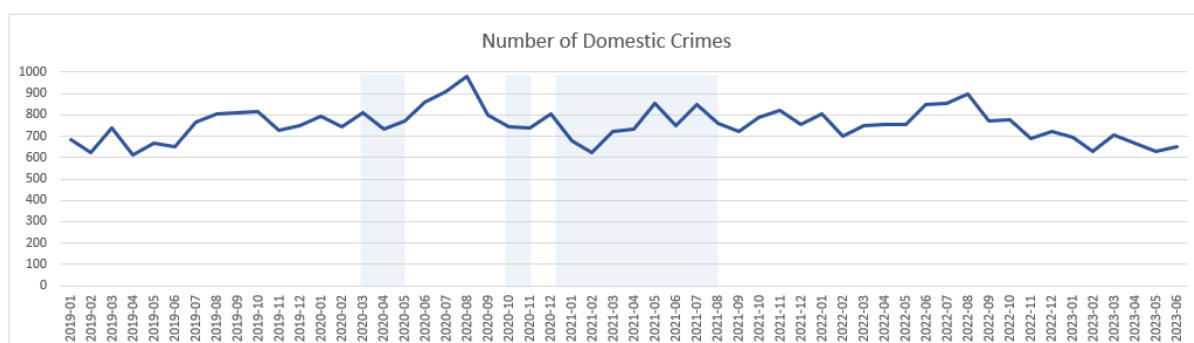
- **Media:** The Constabulary has supported national and local media campaigns such as the ManKind initiative, Sexual Violence and Abuse Week, National Stalking Week, Emergency Alert promotion & “No More” week.
- **Local Community and Partnership Working:** The local neighbourhood teams continue to work in collaboration with partners to promote night-time economy safety and tackle VAWG related crime. Activities include promotion and training for security at night-time venues around the “Ask Angela” Campaign, Barwatch and ensuring that responses to reports of “drink-spiking” are investigated and supported by partners from the health sector. The Exploitation Team have worked with the voluntary sector to highlight the dangers faced by sex workers and provided “support bags” to them.

5. DOMESTIC ABUSE

Crimes Recorded

5.1 The below chart displays Domestic Abuse (DA) crimes recorded over the last four years, overlaid with periods of social restrictions related to Covid-19. The data specifically relates to the number of crimes recorded and should not be taken as an indicator of the number of victims who have reported DA during the last 12 months. Many victims when reporting abuse will also report previous incidents and more than one type of abuse, for example in many cases police will receive a report of physical abuse but risk assessment and investigation will highlight other offences such as Coercive and Controlling Behaviour.

5.2 DA crimes have decreased by 4.2% in the latest quarterly data. Data for the last 12 months show on average 737 crimes per month which is slightly lower than the 3-year rolling average.



Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Domestic Abuse					
Crime					
<i>Crime volume</i>	8696	9304	↓ 6.5%	9309	↓ 6.6%
<i>Proportion of all crime which is Domestic Abuse</i>	17.5%	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Solved number</i>	1046	1073	↓ 2.5%	1076	↓ 2.8%
<i>Solved rate</i>	12.0%	11.5%	↑ 0.5pp	11.6%	↑ 0.4pp
<i>Charged number</i>	832	873	↓ 4.7%	835	↓ 0.4%
<i>Charged rate</i>	9.6%	9.4%	↑ 0.2pp	9.0%	↑ 0.6pp
<i>Domestic Abuse related violence</i>	81.2%	80.6%	↑ 0.6%	81.2%	no change
<i>Domestic Abuse related stalking and harassment</i>	23.6%	26.4%	↓ 2.8%	26.2%	↓ 2.6%
<i>Crimes with High Risk Assessment</i>	855	1504	↓ 43.2%	1563	↓ 45.3%
<i>Crimes with Medium Risk Assessment</i>	2591	2518	↑ 2.9%	2409	↑ 7.6%
<i>Crimes with Standard Risk Assessment</i>	2074	2089	↓ 0.7%	2064	↑ 0.5%
Incidents					
<i>Incidents with High Risk Assessment</i>	98	124	↓ 21.0%	144	↓ 31.9%
<i>Incidents with Medium Risk Assessment</i>	772	997	↓ 22.6%	935	↓ 17.4%
<i>Incidents with Standard Risk Assessment</i>	3333	3327	↑ 0.2%	3111	↑ 7.1%
Victims					
<i>Number of victims (Unique)</i>	6965	7347	↓ 5.2%	7455	↓ 6.6%
<i>Victims per 1000 population</i>	9	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Proportion of victims who are repeat DA victims</i>	18.5%	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	53.0%	48.0%	↑ 5.0pp	49.0%	↑ 4.0pp
<i>Victim Support Referrals</i>	3844	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Victim Personal Statements offered</i>	1838	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Victims linked to Adult Protection Investigation</i>	1258	1216	↑ 3.5%	1316	↓ 4.4%
Offender management					
<i>Domestic abuse arrest rate</i>	32.4%	30.8%	↑ 1.6pp	31.3%	↑ 1.1pp
<i>Domestic Violence Disclosures (Clare's Law)</i>	772	773	↓ 0.1%	660	↑ 17.0%
<i>DVPOs</i>	65	56	↑ 16.1%	Data not available	
<i>DVPNs</i>	70	60	↑ 16.7%	Data not available	
Satisfaction					
<i>Overall Satisfaction</i>	90.6%	92.9%	↓ 2.3pp	Data not available	

Data up to end of June 2023

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Stalking and Harassment					
Stalking					
<i>Crime volume</i>	1024	1102	↓ 7.1%	971	↑ 5.5%
<i>Solved rate</i>	13.1%	13.2%	↓ 0.1p.p	12.8%	↑ 0.3p.p
<i>Solved number</i>	134	146	↓ 8.2%	123	↑ 8.9%
Harassment					
<i>Crime volume</i>	2045	2505	↓ 18.4%	2489	↓ 17.8%
<i>Solved rate</i>	9.1%	9.4%	↓ 0.3p.p	9.5%	↓ 0.4pp
<i>Solved number</i>	186	235	↓ 20.9%	236	↓ 21.2%

Data up to end of June 2023

Victims

- 5.3 The total number of victims has decreased in the last 12 months to 6197 victims (a decrease of 145 victims compared to the last reporting period). In the last 12 months, 22.5% of victims have been repeat victims (more than one offence reported in a 12-month period). This is also a reduction since previous reporting period.

LPC	Total Victims (Not Unique)		Repeat Victims	
	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months
Ipswich East, Felixstowe & Woodbridge	1100	1094	18.7%	22.1%
Lowestoft	1043	1112	23.8%	26.0%
Ipswich West & Hadleigh	977	1023	23.7%	20.9%
Sudbury	725	797	23.4%	22.8%
Mildenhall	582	652	20.6%	23.0%
Bury St Edmunds	544	524	19.1%	22.1%
Stowmarket	475	470	17.5%	19.4%
Ipswich Central	410	420	20.0%	23.3%
Halesworth	423	414	17.3%	24.4%
Suffolk Total	6197	6342	22.5%	25.0%

5.4 The highest demand continues to be within the policing locality of Ipswich East, Felixstowe and Woodbridge, followed by Lowestoft.

5.5 All localities have seen a reduction in repeat victims with the highest reduction seen in Halesworth, which also now has the lowest number of repeat victims.

Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA)

5.6 DARA is now the primary policing tool for identifying risk in Domestic Abuse cases and this has been an area of focus to increase compliance.

5.7 Since the last report the OPTIK DA module has now been rolled out to all frontline Officers allowing for investigation creation at scene with the victims.

5.8 All high-risk DA incidents have to be subject of a Detective Sergeant review within 24 hours. Unless exceptional reasons apply high risk DA cases have to be investigated by officers or staff who are Detectives or Detective equivalents.

Use of Ancillary Orders

5.9 Suffolk Constabulary’s Local Policing Priorities, which have been extended to January 2024, emphasise the Constabulary’s commitment to focus and improve on positive outcomes in the areas of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, and specifically denotes the intention to increase the number of applications for preventative orders.

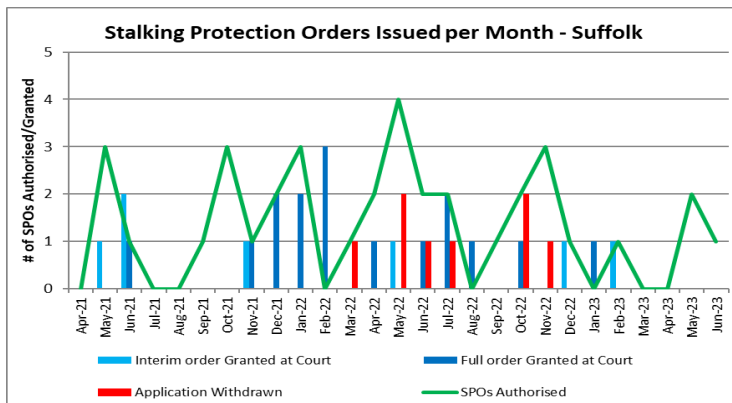
5.10 A Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) is an emergency non-molestation and eviction notice which can be issued by the police, to a perpetrator. Because the DVPN is a police-issued notice, it is effective from the time of issue, thereby giving the victim the immediate support they require in such a situation. Within 48 hours of the DVPN being served on the perpetrator, an application by police to a magistrates’ court for a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) must be heard. A DVPO can prevent the perpetrator from returning to a residence and from having contact with the victim for up to 28 days. This allows the victim a degree of breathing space to consider their options with the help of a support agency. Both the DVPN and DVPO contain a condition prohibiting the perpetrator from molesting the victim. A DVPN will be issued in circumstances where no other enforceable restrictions can be placed upon the perpetrator.

5.11 The table below represents the number of DVPNs issued and conversion to DVPOs. This currently sits at 98.6%. June 2023 saw the second highest number issued in the last 12 months.

Month / Year	DVPNs Issued	DVPOs Issued
Jul-22	4	4
Aug-22	11	11
Sep-22	6	6
Oct-22	5	5
Nov-22	4	4
Dec-22	7	6
Jan-23	5	5
Feb-23	6	6
Mar-23	4	4
Apr-23	4	4
May-23	6	6
Jun-23	9	9
Total	71	70
Average/month	5.9	5.8
Conversion rate	98.6%	

5.12 The table below represents the number of Stalking Prevention Orders issued applied for. Over the last 12 months 54% of applications have been successful with more still awaiting further decisions.

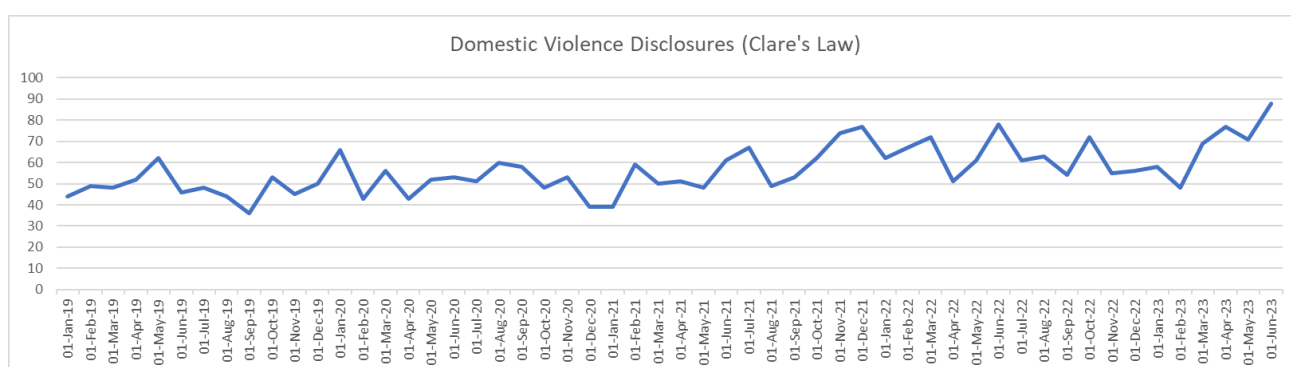
Month	Suffolk				
	SPOs Authorised	Outstanding Result	Interim order Granted at Court	Full order Granted at Court	Application Withdrawn
Jul-22	2	0	0	2	1
Aug-22	0	0	0	1	0
Sep-22	1	1	0	0	0
Oct-22	2	0	0	1	2
Nov-22	3	1	0	0	1
Dec-22	1	0	1	0	0
Jan-23	0	0	0	1	0
Feb-23	1	0	1	0	0
Mar-23	0	0	0	0	0
Apr-23	0	0	0	0	0
May-23	2	2	0	0	0
Jun-23	1	1	0	0	0
Total	13	5	2	5	4
Avg. Authorised/Mnth	1.08	Avg. Orders Granted/Mnth		0.58	
Conversion Rate	54%				



5.13 Since the delivery of training in spring 2023 relating to ancillary orders, there has been a marked improvements in volumes and outcomes.

Domestic Violence Disclosures Scheme (DVDS) - (Clare's Law)

- 5.14 The scheme allows the public to request information from the police if they believe their partner may be a danger towards them (the right to ask). It also allows police to proactively make a disclosure to a victim (the right to know) any of the information they may have become aware about where the perpetrator has a new partner and a history of domestic violence and violent acts. It helps an individual to make a more informed decision on whether to continue a relationship and provides further help and support to assist them when making that choice.
- 5.15 Applications can be made via the Constabulary website or by calling 101. There is a process set out to manage applications and this requires both time and resourcing to complete. Future growth in applications will require additional growth in resources to manage the process.
- 5.16 A recent pilot to speak to those with eligible for DVDS through live link technology (Rapid Video Response) has proven successful in reducing process times.
- 5.17 New Statutory Guidance issued in April 2023 has created additional demand as the time frame for the entire process has been reduced from 35 to 28 days, and requires additional fast time checks (within 24 hours) and continual risk assessment at each stage of the process.
- 5.18 There has been a gradual upward trend in the volume of DVDS recorded in Suffolk since January 2019 as shown below, with figures continuing to increase.



Op Encompass

- 5.19 Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse.
- 5.20 Operation Encompass ensures that there is a simple telephone call or notification to a school's trained Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to the start of the next school day after an incident of police attended domestic abuse where there are children related to either of the adult parties involved.
- 5.21 Information is shared with a school's Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to the start of the next school day after officers have attended a domestic abuse incident. This sharing of information enables appropriate support to be given, dependent upon the needs and wishes of the child.
- 5.22 The Suffolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has ensured all Primary Schools and High Schools are signed up and have also worked to ensure other educational establishments

(including Pupil Referral Units, Specialist Provision; Colleges and Independent Schools) are also signed up to sharing agreements under Op Encompass.

- 5.23 In the last 12 months ending June 2023 over 6,000 Op Encompass reports were shared with education settings, enabling schools to offer additional pastoral support to child victims of domestic abuse. This figure continues to fluctuate in line with seasonal trends:

Month reported	Op Encompass reports
Jul-22	604
Aug-22	628
Sep-22	573
Oct-22	587
Nov-22	490
Dec-22	498
Jan-23	530
Feb-23	510
Mar-23	578
Apr-23	470
May-23	469
Jun-23	474

Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators

- 5.24 The restructured Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator (DAC) Team based in the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) commenced in early January 2023. There are six DACs who are now fully embedded and have completed training in police ICT, personal safety, domestic abuse processes and Advanced Honour Based Abuse (HBA) Safeguarding. A cohesive team has been formed, bringing skills and experience from partner agency employment, showing innovation and creativity.

- 5.25 The DACs undertake the following areas of work to support victims of Domestic Abuse:

- Partnership working with [Anglia Care Trust \(ACT\)](#) and [Leeway \(IDVA\)](#)
- Refer Medium Risk cases to ACT if victim consent is record
- Research and attend [Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference \(MARAC\)](#).
- Deliver DVDS and safety planning.
- Safeguard victims of Domestic Abuse Prison Release Subjects
- Manage Suffolk Constabularies Domestic Abuse enquires
- Collate Suffolk Constabularies Domestic Violence Protection Notice/Order and Stalking Protection order data
- Honour Based Abuse Single Point of Contact

- 5.26 Immediate safety advice should be given by frontline officers at point of crisis and appropriate signposting to relevant support services. Safety planning is carried out again by Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) for high-risk victims and ACT specialist support workers for medium risk victims who have consented to the ACT referral. IDVA Referrals are made electronically by the police officer taking the report from the victim. Some medium risk cases are suitable to refer to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) if the repeat case criteria are met. These cases are captured by the DACs and referrals made. The changes made to the DACs roles and introduction of new processes for frontline officers continue to be monitored through the Domestic Abuse Governance Board.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR)

- 5.27 Every homicide that is domestic related is reviewed by a Partnership Panel to establish whether a partnership review should be undertaken. This is a statutory responsibility. Where relevant, Suffolk Constabulary is actively involved and responds to any actions identified. Guidance in relation to DHRs and Suffolk related DHRs published can be found on the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership website [Safeguarding Practice Reviews — Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership \(suffolksp.org.uk\)](https://www.suffolksp.org.uk).
- 5.28 The Home Office undertakes its own national analysis which sets out what is known about domestic homicide, and draws out common themes and trends and identifies learning that emerged across a sample of Domestic Homicide Reviews. The latest report can be downloaded here: [Domestic Homicide Reviews - Key findings from analysis of domestic homicide reviews](#)

White Ribbon Support

- 5.29 The White Ribbon Day for 2023 will take place on Wednesday 25 November. The Constabulary will continue to work with the Local Authorities, Charities, retailers, licenced venues, along with sporting venues to raise awareness of the scheme leading up to the month's activity. Information about the White Ribbon Charity can be found at [White Ribbon UK](https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk).

6. RAPE AND SERIOUS SEXUAL OFFENCES (RASSO)

- 6.1 There continues to be effective partnership working in the RASSO arena with close working relationships across the professionals involved in the victim's journey.
- 6.2 The RASSO Joint Operational Improvement Meeting (JOIM) has continued to meet monthly, and the agenda includes a data pack where all key areas of performance are reported. This assures there is focus on timelines of submissions, and cases moving through the early criminal justice process. The JOIM has identified significant backlogs in RASSO trial dates for some victims and last-minute Court trial delays which are affecting victim confidence.
- 6.3 There remains a positive professionals partnership network throughout the victim's journey from first report. Ongoing engagement with all sectors supporting RASSO complainants is a key part of Op Soteria.
- 6.4 In June 2023 Suffolk alongside all 43 Home Office Police Forces adopted Op Soteria as the National operating Model for RASSO investigations. This will be a significant piece of work across the RASSO teams in Suffolk, requiring a whole force self-assessment and evaluation of data before the implementation of positive change.
- 6.5 In support of Op Soteria, the force lead at Detective Superintendent level in the Crime Safeguarding and Incident Management (CSIM) department and Safeguarding Detective Inspectors (DI's) have been identified as pillar leads for the work. The work will be managed across 6 pillars representing different areas of focus for RASSO investigations and Investigator wellbeing. The Constabulary Strategic Business and Operational Services (SBOS) department is engaged to compile the data collection and key performance indicator analysis which is required to inform the Op Soteria self- assessment. Suffolk is engaged with the College of Policing and National Leads for Op Soteria.

- 6.6 All Suffolk RASSO staff are to receive the new Op Soteria training course RASSO investigative skills development programme before the end of 2023.
- 6.7 The performance position has improved over the past 12 months, at a time of continued high reporting and staffing demands. There have been improved charge and remand rates across the RASSO teams, which is extremely positive.
- 6.8 There continues to be an increased use of Early Investigative Advice from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) which continues to drive improved performance and the ability to identify cases for progression at the earliest stage.

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
RASSO					
<i>Crime volume</i>	2204	2267	↓2.8%	2080	↑6.0%
<i>Solved rate</i>	6.5%	5.5%	↑1.0pp	5.9%	↑0.6pp
<i>Solved number</i>	144	125	↑15.2%	122	↑18.0%
<i>Charged rate</i>	6.1%	4.9%	↑1.2pp	5.3%	↑0.8pp
<i>Charged number</i>	135	111	↑21.6%	109	↑23.9%
<i>Investigation not possible</i>	2.1%	2.2%	↓0.1pp	2.7%	↓0.6pp
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	52.2%	46.9%	↑5.3pp	50.1%	↑2.1pp
<i>Evidential difficulties</i>	60.3%	55.8%	↑4.5pp	61.8%	↓1.5pp
<i>Under investigation</i>	33.7%				
<i>Non recent</i>	27.1%	24.5%	↑2.6pp	26.1%	↑1.0pp
<i>SARC attendance - Under 21 years</i>	75	56	↑33.9%		
<i>SARC attendance - 21 years and over</i>	93	81	↑14.8%		

Data up to end of June 2023

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Child Sexual Abuse					
<i>Crime volume</i>	1259	1146	↑9.9%	1271	↓0.9%
<i>Solved rate</i>	11.7%	9.9%	↑1.8pp	10.0%	↑1.7pp
<i>Solved number</i>	148	113	↑31.0%	127	↑16.5%
<i>Charged rate</i>	10.6%	8.7%	↑1.9pp	9.0%	↑1.6pp
<i>Charged number</i>	134	100	↑34.0%	114	↑17.5%
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	35.7%	35.2%	↑0.5pp	34.0%	↑1.7pp
<i>Investigation not possible</i>	2.3%	2.6%	↓0.3pp	2.9%	↓0.6pp
<i>Non recent CSA</i>	27.0%		No comparison- strategic measure		

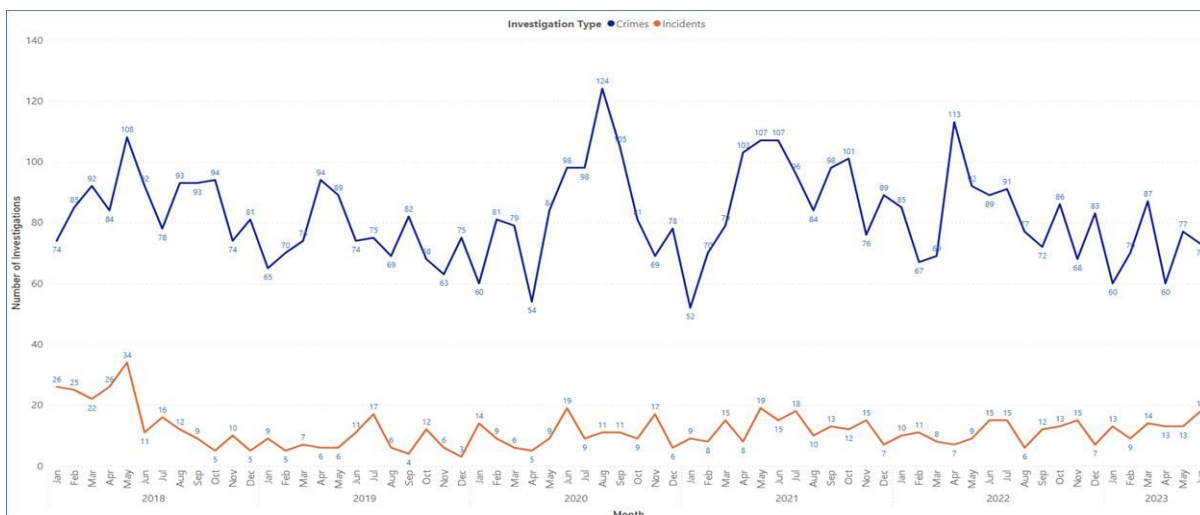
Data up to end of June 2023

- 6.9 The Constabulary continues to encourage victim engagement working with the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service and often visits victims jointly to deliver important updates. Staff have a strong working relationship with the ISVA service and a victim journey leaflet was developed jointly to provide clear guidance to all victims at the initial stage of reporting.
- 6.10 There has been further increases in victim attending the SARC particularly younger victims which is positive. The younger demographic are particularly vulnerable to RASSO offences and the SARC attendance can improve their experience from the outset. Providing ISVA and medical support.

7 HATE CRIME

- 7.1 Quarterly data is produced in relation to Hate Crime. This data is shared across localities and Community Safety Partnerships to ensure crime trends, repeat victims and vulnerable victims

are identified and that referrals into relevant support agencies are made and that targeted preventative action considered.



Hate crimes and Incidents in Suffolk up to the end of June 2023.

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Hate Crime					
<i>Crime volume</i>	906	1071	↓15.4%	1023	↓11.4%
<i>Solved rate</i>	14.9%	13.3%	↑1.6pp	15.2%	↓0.3pp
<i>Solved number</i>	135	142	↓4.9%	155	↓12.9%
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	33.8%	28.7%	↑5.1pp	26.8%	↑7.0pp
<i>Investigation not possible</i>	2.5%	2.1%	↑0.4pp	2.2%	↑0.3pp

Data up to end of June 2023

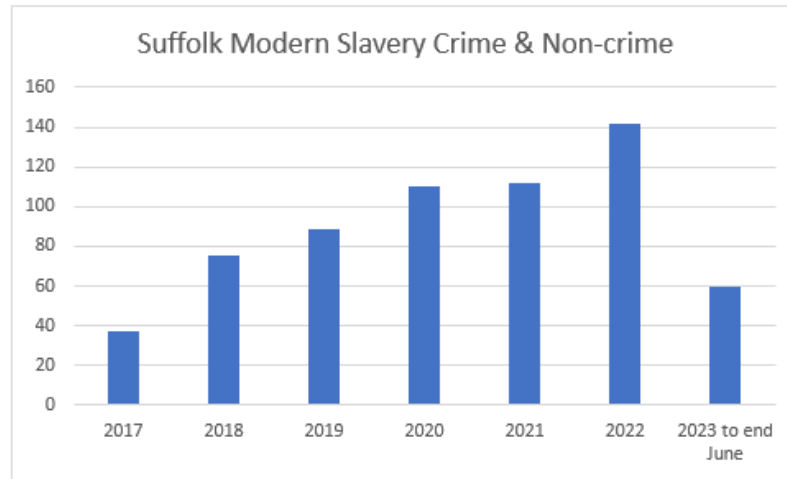
- 7.2 There is no legal requirement for an individual to disclose the specific element of the protected characteristics, and data quality is an issue nationally. Similarly, where there is an overarching characteristic (such as sexuality) the recording would result in a large number of 'other' which could inaccurately reflect the make-up. This is an action on the new Hate Crime Delivery Plan.
- 7.3 Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels are held on a quarterly basis across the county, chaired by local policing Inspectors, attended by uniform and Criminal Investigation Department colleagues, an independent panel member, Diverse Communities coordinator and representatives from Suffolk County Council. These panels offer a level of intrusive supervision and accountability over Hate Crimes. Missed investigative opportunities are explored as well and scrutiny over what support has been offered to victims. Best practice is also identified with learning shared across the organisation.
- 7.4 The Panels have identified that Suffolk Constabulary are good at identifying a hate crime, thereby allowing for early investigative opportunities to be explored and appropriate referrals to be made to support services.
- 7.5 The Panels have also identified that further work is required to drive up detection rates for Hate Crime. Scrutiny is now being applied to offences closed using Outcome codes 15 and 16 to ensure their use is appropriate or if a more appropriate code could be applied.
- 7.6 The Diverse communities Co-ordinator works closely with colleagues from the Modern Slavery and Vulnerable Communities Team, Safer Neighbourhood Team Officers, Suffolk County

Council and other partners from both local and national charities to ensure that reporting routes are shared, that victims are safeguarded, and their needs are met. The annual Hate Crime Awareness week is planned in conjunction with partners to ensure consistent messaging.

- 7.7 Hate Crime Delivery Board and Hate Action Plan is owned by the Southern Area Commander with delivery supported by tactical lead in the South Neighbourhood Partnership Team. The Delivery Plan has recently been re-written and is now aligned to the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice. The plan is split down into four key areas – Responding to Hate, Community and Partners, Victim and Witnesses and Performance Management.
- 7.8 Work has started focusing on Hate Crimes at sporting events, with new partnerships being developed with official sporting bodies. The Delivery Board is also now closely linked in with the Op Hampshire leads, to ensure that support and investigative opportunities are explored for internal victims and witnesses.

8 MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING (MHST)

- 8.1 Suffolk has 22 Victim Liaison Officers (VLOs) trained to provide enhanced support when victims are either first encountered or if required to assist with ongoing investigations where additional support and rapport building would be beneficial. The spread is across all 3 localities and deployments have continued on a regular basis throughout the year.
- 8.2 Modern Slavery and Vulnerable community Advisors continue to provide support and training to frontline officers /staff and are delivering inputs to the Integrated Delivery Teams (IDT's) and new staff in the Contact and Control Room (CCR). The joint work with the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children team continues and a guidance document has been devised and translated into 4 of the main languages identified to provide ongoing advice and signposting to these vulnerable individuals. The team continues to be proactive in their visits to local businesses and communities highlighting the signs and indicators but also providing advice, support and signposting to those affected.
- 8.3 Operational staff across Suffolk Constabulary continue to be signposted to briefings and training around the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process for victims of MSHT. Further sudden changes to the Statutory Guidance were reviewed, summarised, and disseminated to all staff within a few days, highlighting that the objective factors requirement in the reasonable grounds process has been removed, replaced by specific evidence which should be relied upon for an appropriate decision to be made.
- 8.4 Officers are continuing to identify potential victims of modern slavery and exploitation during the investigative stage with positive results. Earlier this year a male was convicted of trafficking offences and given a Slavery and Trafficking Protection Order, the first in Suffolk. There have also been further Modern slavery charges against 3 other offenders and a charge for facilitating illegal entry brought against the driver of the HGV where 13 migrants were, including four Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASCs), were located and safeguarded.
- 8.5 Crime reporting remains consistent but the recent charges and conviction, places Suffolk in a very strong position against the national picture.



Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Modern Slavery					
Crime					
<i>Crime volume</i>	79	117	↓32.5%	99	↓20.2%
<i>Solved rate</i>	6.3%	2.6%	↑3.7pp	2.2%	↑4.1pp
<i>Solved number</i>	5	3	↑66.7%	2	↑150.0%
<i>Charged rate</i>	6.3%	2.6%	↑3.7pp	2.2%	↑4.1pp
<i>Charged number</i>	5	3	↑66.7%	2	↑150.0%
<i>NRM</i> s	147	167	↓12.0%	Data not available	

Data up to end of June 2023

8.6 The intranet page for MSHT has been redesigned making it easier for staff to access support and guidance when dealing with victims.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10 OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

10.1 None.

11 CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION

11.1 There continues to be national backlogs in the Courts and criminal justice system, placing delays on trials and hearings, negatively impacting vulnerable victims and witness care teams workloads. Cases are subject to escalation processes with robust accountability and challenge through the local criminal justice board. RASSO cases are being appropriately prioritised.

11.2 Despite this pressure, the paper highlights the positive results starting to appear throughout last year as a result of our prioritising a whole systems approach in tackling criminality that impacts vulnerable victims the most. Improved specialist training and general awareness has supported this focus alongside our use improved use of mobile technology. There is strong governance in place, overseeing processes which are informed by improved data dashboards allowing for greater scrutiny and understanding of performance. Continuing focus remains in

place, in line with national strategies such as Op Soteria, which will continue to improve the victim journey, and reduce repeat victimisation.